

Advance Monthly Retail Sales

MARCH 1984

FOR WIRE TRANSMISSION 8:30 A.M. EST, Thursday, April 12, 1984

CB-84-74

SEE "NOTICE OF REVISED RETAIL SALES ESTIMATES" BELOW TABLE 1 ON PAGE 2. THE SALES COMPARISONS IN THIS REPORT ARE BASED ON REVISED DATA.

Advance U.S. retail sales for March, adjusted for seasonal, holiday, and trading-day differences but not for price changes, were \$103.4 billion, down 2.2 percent from the revised February level of \$105.7 billion but 10.2 percent above year-ago sales. Severe weather across much of the Nation during March may have been a factor in this monthly decline, which is the largest since December 1973. (The revised February estimate declined 0.8 percent from January.) Excluding the automotive group, total sales dropped 1.0 percent from February but were 8.3 percent above March 1983 sales. While February and March both showed month-to-month declines, first quarter 1984 sales were 3.4 percent above the October through December period and 13.4 percent above the same period last year.

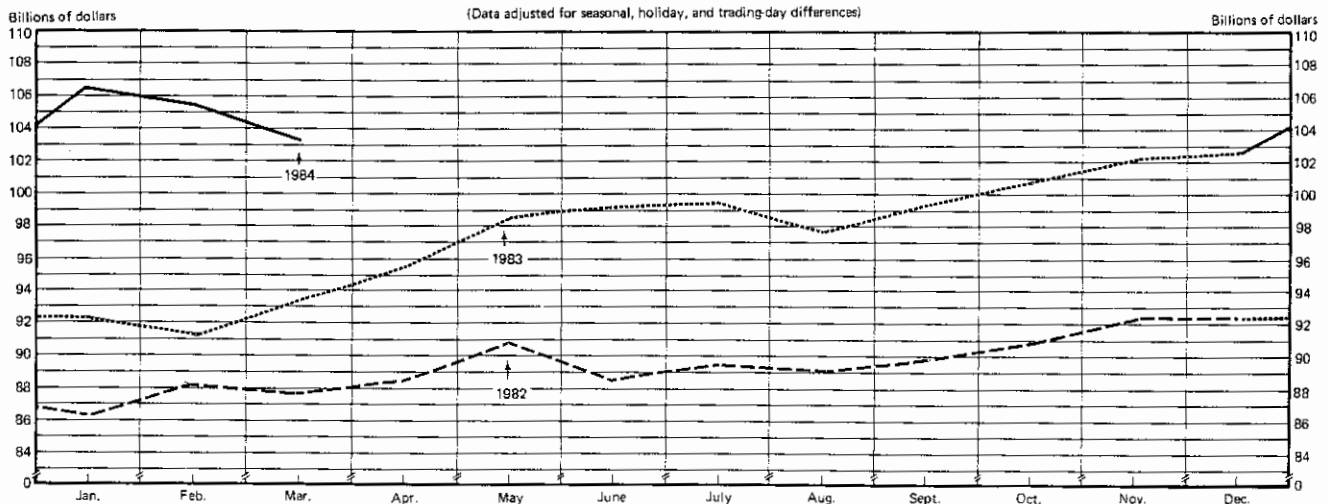
Sales of durable goods declined 4.6 percent from February but were 17.6 percent above last year sales. Automotive group sales were largely responsible for the decrease in durable goods, with the sharpest drop since June 1982, down 7.0 percent from last month but 19.0 percent above March 1983. Building materials sales declined 2.6 percent from February, the first decrease since September 1983, while furniture group sales showed the only increase in durable goods, up 1.0 percent from last month.

Nondurable goods sales declined 0.9 percent from February but were 6.8 percent above the previous year level. General merchandise group sales showed the sharpest decline since May 1976, down 3.1 percent from February, but were up 8.9 percent from March 1983. Sales of eating and drinking places declined 3.2 percent from February but were 6.1 percent above the previous year. Apparel group sales were down 1.2 percent from the previous month while sales levels for food stores, gasoline service stations, and drug stores were little changed.

For a description of the sample design and reliability of the data, see back page.

The Advance Monthly Retail Sales report for April is scheduled to be released May 11, 1984, at 8:30 a.m.

ESTIMATED MONTHLY RETAIL SALES January 1982-March 1984



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The Advance Monthly Retail Sales report, the Monthly Retail Trade report, and the Annual Retail Trade report are available on a single subscription from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402, at \$39 per year. Add \$9.75 for each subscription to a foreign address. Postage stamps not acceptable; currency submitted at sender's risk. Remittances from foreign countries must be by international money order or by a draft on a U.S. bank. Single copies of the Advance Monthly Retail Sales report are for sale by Subscriber Services (Publications), Bureau of the Census, Washington, D.C. 20233, at \$1.75 each.

Table 1. Estimated Monthly Retail Sales, by Kind of Business

(Sales in millions of dollars)

SIC code	Kind of business	Not adjusted					Adjusted ¹				
		1984			1983		1984			1983	
		Mar. ² adv.	Feb. prel.	Jan. final	Mar.	Feb.	Mar. ² adv.	Feb. prel.	Jan. final	Mar.	Feb.
	Retail trade, total.....	103,768	93,925	93,089	93,740	78,863	103,400	105,744	106,602	93,804	92,211
	Total (excl. auto group)..	81,070	73,331	74,297	74,442	64,303	82,973	83,772	84,569	76,635	75,863
	Durable goods stores, total.	36,610	32,971	31,170	31,307	24,538	35,250	36,965	37,127	29,986	28,840
52	Building mat., hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers..	5,075	4,338	4,141	4,319	3,340	5,492	5,641	5,494	4,673	4,511
521,3	Building mat. and supply stores.	(*)	3,290	3,068	3,131	2,437	(*)	4,278	4,042	3,396	3,293
525	Hardware stores.....	(*)	636	687	707	586	(*)	809	874	765	778
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	22,698	20,594	18,792	19,298	14,560	20,427	21,972	22,033	17,169	16,348
551,2,5,6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	20,806	18,984	17,135	17,641	13,206	18,478	20,025	20,041	15,475	14,641
551	Motor vehicle (franchised)....	(*)	17,169	15,667	15,672	11,818	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
553	Auto and home supply stores.....	(*)	1,610	1,657	1,657	1,354	(*)	1,947	1,992	1,694	1,707
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	4,598	4,113	4,279	4,010	3,422	4,673	4,628	4,791	4,078	3,976
571	Furniture and home furnishings..	(*)	2,412	2,543	2,456	2,031	(*)	2,686	2,829	2,432	2,334
5722,32	Household appliance, radio, and TV stores.....	(*)	1,387	1,427	1,255	1,123	(*)	1,602	1,622	1,334	1,338
5722	Household appliance stores....	(*)	568	591	545	472	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
	Nondurable goods total.....	67,158	60,954	61,919	62,433	54,325	68,150	68,779	69,475	63,818	63,371
53	General merchandise group stores..	11,208	9,167	8,853	10,342	7,830	12,417	12,810	12,835	11,400	11,275
531	Department stores.....	9,207	7,467	7,266	8,479	6,318	10,151	10,502	10,546	9,328	9,157
533	Variety stores.....	(*)	633	592	713	555	(*)	838	836	749	762
539	Misc. general mdse. stores.....	(*)	1,067	995	1,150	957	(*)	1,470	1,453	1,323	1,356
54	Food stores.....	22,825	20,834	21,110	21,162	19,032	22,287	22,254	22,468	21,215	21,072
541	Grocery stores.....	21,498	19,597	19,918	19,865	17,878	20,953	20,959	21,189	19,945	19,820
554	Gasoline service stations.....	8,435	7,980	8,340	7,983	7,267	8,687	8,702	8,751	8,230	8,184
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	4,296	3,610	3,765	4,118	3,145	4,664	4,721	4,704	4,285	4,259
561	Men's and boys' clothing and furnishings stores.....	(*)	500	563	560	474	(*)	673	698	660	664
562,3,8	Women's clothing, specialty stores, furriers.....	(*)	1,495	1,513	1,650	1,243	(*)	1,939	1,901	1,698	1,664
565	Family clothing stores.....	(*)	750	770	842	643	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
566	Shoe stores.....	(*)	629	677	779	566	(*)	808	814	740	755
58	Eating and drinking places.....	10,073	9,301	9,210	9,363	8,160	10,023	10,357	10,268	9,448	9,412
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	3,395	3,243	3,249	3,187	2,911	3,412	3,417	3,434	3,190	3,181
592	Liquor stores.....	(*)	1,439	1,481	1,486	1,360	(*)	1,622	1,689	1,594	1,587
5961 (pt.)	Mail-order houses (department store merchandise).....	(*)	310	332	375	251	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
53,56,57	GAF ³	(*)	19,664	19,712	21,199	16,760	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)

*Advance estimates are not available from the subsample panel for these kinds of business.

NA Not available.

¹Data adjusted for seasonal variations, holiday, and trading-day differences. (See Explanatory Material in the Monthly Retail Trade Report, BR-84-02).

²Advance estimates are based on early reporting by a small subsample of the full survey panel. All other estimates are based on the full sample.

³GAF represents stores which specialize in department store types of merchandise.

Note: Totals include data for kinds of business not shown separately.

NOTICE OF REVISED RETAIL SALES ESTIMATES - The adjusted and unadjusted monthly estimates of retail sales from January 1978 to December 1983 have been revised utilizing the results from the 1982 Annual Retail Trade Survey. The revised estimates and a description of the methodology are contained in the Revised Monthly Retail Sales and Inventories January 1974-December 1983 Report (BR-13-83S), which was released the week of March 26.

Table 2. Percent Change in Estimated Monthly Retail Sales, by Kind of Business for the United States

(Adjusted for seasonal variations, holiday, and trading-day differences)

SIC code	Kind of business	Percent change					
		Mar. 1984 advance from--		Feb. 1984 preliminary from--		Jan. 1984 through Mar. 1984	
		Feb. 1984 prelim.	Mar. 1983 final	Jan. 1984 final	Feb. 1983 final	Oct. 1983 through Dec. 1983	Jan. 1983 through Mar. 1983
	Retail trade, total.....	-2.2	+10.2	-0.8	+14.7	+3.4	+13.4
	Total (excl. automotive group)....	-1.0	+8.3	-0.9	+10.4	+2.9	+9.9
	Durable goods stores, total.....	-4.6	+17.6	-0.4	+28.2	+5.1	+24.6
52	Building materials, hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers.....	-2.6	+17.5	+2.7	+25.0	+6.7	+20.9
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	-7.0	+19.0	-0.3	+34.4	+5.5	+29.3
551,2,5,6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	-7.7	+19.4	-0.1	+36.8	+5.7	+30.7
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	+1.0	+14.6	-3.4	+16.4	+3.5	+16.4
	Nondurable goods stores, total.....	-0.9	+6.8	-1.0	+8.5	+2.6	+8.2
53	General merchandise group stores.....	-3.1	+8.9	-0.2	+13.6	+3.5	+11.6
531	Department stores.....	-3.3	+8.8	-0.4	+14.7	+4.1	+12.1
54	Food stores.....	+0.1	+5.1	-1.0	+5.6	+2.0	+6.0
541	Grocery stores.....	0.0	+5.1	-1.1	+5.7	+2.2	+6.2
554	Gasoline service stations.....	-0.2	+5.6	-0.6	+6.3	-0.1	+5.4
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	-1.2	+8.8	+0.4	+10.8	+1.3	+10.5
58	Eating and drinking places.....	-3.2	+6.1	+0.9	+10.0	+3.5	+8.7
591	Drug and proprietary stores.....	-0.1	+7.0	-0.5	+7.4	+4.0	+8.0

Table 3. Estimated Monthly Retail Sales of Group II Companies, by Kind of Business

(Sales in millions of dollars)

SIC code	Kind of business	Not adjusted			Adjusted ¹		
		Feb. 1984 prelim.	Jan. 1984 final	Feb. 1983	Feb. 1984 prelim.	Jan. 1984 final	Feb. 1983
	Retail trade, total.....	30,849	30,668	27,055	36,783	37,047	33,191
53	General merchandise group stores.....	8,262	7,952	7,009	11,635	11,688	10,168
531	Department stores.....	7,153	6,948	6,036	10,075	10,099	8,761
533	Variety stores.....	481	448	434	651	650	605
539	Miscellaneous general merchandise stores.....	628	556	539	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
54	Food stores.....	11,440	11,584	10,465	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
541	Grocery stores.....	11,284	11,439	10,319	12,043	12,143	11,377
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	1,440	1,429	1,186	2,035	2,050	1,743
562,3,8	Women's clothing, specialty stores, furriers.....	649	616	518	901	907	749
566	Shoe stores.....	319	332	275	427	436	384
591	Drug stores and proprietary stores.....	1,772	1,781	1,542	1,924	1,930	1,733

¹Data adjusted for seasonal variations, holiday, and trading-day differences. (See Explanatory Material in the Monthly Retail Trade Report, BR-84-02).

Note: The Group II component of the sample consists of companies which had 11 or more retail establishments according to the most recent update of multi-establishment files and which were selected with certainty (i.e., their sales size exceeded specified dollar volume cutoffs which vary by kind of business).

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Sample Design and Reliability of Data

The advance sales estimates are based on early reporting of sales by a small subsample of the Bureau's retail survey panel. Because of the early reporting, the advance estimates can differ from the subsequent estimates which are based on monthly reports obtained from the full sample of retail stores. In addition, sampling variability between the subsample used for the advance estimates and the full sample can cause a difference. For most months, such differences have been reduced by modifying the advance estimates prior to publication on the basis of the relationship between the advance and full sample data for previous months.

Percentage differences between advance and full sample preliminary estimates of month-to-month percentage change in seasonally adjusted total retail store sales have ranged from approximately -0.7 percent to +1.4 percent with the average of the absolute differences about 0.5 percent for the past 12 months. For individual kind-of-business groups, these differences tend to be higher. Sampling variability of and revisions to advance-to-preliminary estimates are shown in table 4 below.

Preliminary estimates for February 1984 and final estimates for January 1984 based on the full sample will be published later this month in the Monthly Retail Trade Report for February (BR-84-02). The complete report will provide sales estimates in greater detail and will present a description of revisions, and the techniques used in developing the estimates. The complete report will include additional measures of sampling variability.

Table 4. Sampling Variability of and Revision to Advance-to-Preliminary Estimate

SIC code	Kind of business	Estimated coefficient of variation in percent of the advance-to-preliminary ratio			Preliminary-to-final percent change minus the advance-to-preliminary percent change			
		Range ¹		Median	Range ²		Mean	Average of absolute difference
		From	To		From	To		
	Retail trade, total.....	0.6	0.8	0.8	-0.7	+1.4	-0.1	0.5
	Total (excl. automotive group)....	0.7	0.9	0.8	-1.1	+0.9	-0.1	0.5
	Durable goods stores, total.....	1.2	2.1	1.5	-3.7	-2.3	-0.2	1.2
52	Building materials, hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers.....	1.6	4.2	2.4	-4.7	+4.9	+0.4	2.5
55 ex. 554	Automotive dealers.....	1.5	2.7	2.0	-4.5	+2.7	-0.2	1.6
551,2,5, 6,7,9	Motor vehicle and miscellaneous automotive dealers.....	1.1	2.3	1.6	-4.6	+3.0	-0.2	1.8
57	Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores.....	1.6	6.7	2.7	-2.7	+3.9	+0.2	1.9
	Nondurable goods stores, total.....	0.6	0.8	0.7	-0.8	+0.9	-0.1	0.6
53	General merchandise group stores.....	0.4	0.7	0.5	-1.8	+2.2	-0.1	1.1
531	Department stores.....	0.2	0.5	0.3	-1.3	+2.6	+0.1	0.9
54	Food stores.....	0.7	1.6	1.0	-1.6	+1.4	-0.1	0.7
541	Grocery stores.....	0.3	0.7	0.4	-1.6	+1.4	-0.2	0.7
554	Gasoline service stations.....	0.7	1.2	1.0	-3.6	+3.2	-0.1	1.4
56	Apparel and accessory stores.....	1.2	3.0	1.9	-3.6	+8.7	-0.4	2.1
58	Eating and drinking places.....	0.8	1.5	1.0	-3.0	-4.0	-0.5	1.5
591	Drug stores and proprietary stores.....	0.3	2.5	1.1	-1.9	-2.4	-0.2	0.9

¹The ranges of sampling variability shown are based on sales estimates unadjusted for seasonal variation, holiday, and trading-day differences for the data months of January-December 1982.

²The ranges shown for the retail trade total are based on sales estimates adjusted for seasonal variations, holiday, and trading-day differences for the 12-month period, March 1983-February 1984. The ranges for all other totals and kinds of business are based on the 12-month period January-December 1982.

Note: See appendix B, Reliability of Data, in the Monthly Retail Trade Report for a discussion on the measures of sampling variability.